United Nations A/ES-10/678–S/2015/309

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
4 May 2015

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventieth year

Identical letters dated 1 May 2015 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I write to draw your attention to the critical ongoing situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and, more specifically, to the grave reality faced by Palestinian children as a direct result of the Israeli military occupation.

The vulnerability of Palestinian children is deepening as they continue to bear the brunt of increasingly oppressive, violent and illegal Israeli policies and practices being systematically perpetrated against the Palestinian people. For nearly 50 years, Palestinian children have suffered at the hands of Israeli occupying forces and will tragically continue to suffer as long as Israel, the occupying Power, remains immune from consequences of their human rights violations and crimes. In this regard, we are of the firm conviction that only accountability can remedy the prevailing culture of impunity and compel respect for international law and human rights.

Every single day, and in countless ways, Palestinian children are victims of Israeli human rights violations, with no child considered too young to be spared the oppression being meted out by the Israeli occupying forces and extremist settlers. One recent incident involved a seven-year-old child, Ahmad Zaatari, and his cousin, twelve-year-old Mohammed Zaatari, who were detained by occupying forces on 29 April in Occupied East Jerusalem, were taken from their neighbourhood and endured hours of interrogation. The seven-year-old Ahmad was reportedly interrogated for nearly eight hours, a horrifying and traumatic ordeal for a child of any age. Moreover, Ahmad and Mohammed's families were not immediately informed of where their children had been taken, only learning of the location where their children were being held three hours after they had been taken. Four hours after that, at around 2.30 a.m., Ahmad was released, terrified and hungry. Mohammed remained detained until the following day, also deprived of food and water during his interrogation. Also, two other family members, Ala'a Zaatari and

Please recycle

Mehdi Zaatari, both children and both 15 years of age, had been detained a day earlier.

According to Ayed Abu Eqtaish, Accountability Program Director at Defense for Children International-Palestine, the arbitrary detention of children under 12 years of age is illegal as they are below the age of criminal responsibility. By arresting children as young as Ahmad, Israel is grossly flouting international standards for the treatment of children, as well as its own legal code. Moreover, Israel's systematic use of excessive force against the Palestinian civilian population, causing death and injury to civilians, including children, violates numerous other provisions of international humanitarian and human rights law.

In this regard, yet more child casualties have been caused by Israel's use of force against civilians. On 27 April, 18-year-old Mohammed Murad Yahiya was shot and killed by Israeli occupying forces in Al-Araqa village in western Jenin on his way back from a family wedding. On 26 April, 17-year-old Mohammed Abu Ghnem was shot and killed at a checkpoint in Occupied East Jerusalem. Also, on 28 April, 14-year-old Fadi Abu Mandil was shot by Israeli fire at his home in the central Gaza Strip when occupying forces opened fire on Palestinian farmers, and he remains in critical condition. On the same day, six-year-old Zakariya Mahmoud Al-Umour was injured after being run over by an Israeli truck in the village of Yatta, and, on 20 April, nine-year-old Mohammed Al-Qatuni was injured after being run over by an Israeli occupying force jeep on the Nablus-Huwwara road. On 22 April, a 17-year-old boy was physically assaulted by Israeli settlers near Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in Al-Khalil, and, on 23 April, occupying forces raided Al-Sawiya girls' school in Nablus and fired tear gas and stun grenades at students, resulting in 200 Palestinian students suffering from tear gas inhalation.

These are only a few examples in the recent period of illegal policies and practices by the occupying Power, in complete disregard for the safety and well-being of children and for the applicable humanitarian and human rights laws. These crimes committed against our children are intolerable and unacceptable. We demand that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately end all its violations and abuses against Palestinian children and comply with its obligations under international law, including, inter alia, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

We call upon the international community to uphold its responsibilities and provide the necessary assistance and protection to Palestinian children and hold accountable the violators of international law, especially those laws that are meant to protect children's rights. There are international standards for the treatment of children, and Palestinian children are no exception. The international community must not spare any effort to safeguard our children. In the relevant words of the Secretary-General at the Security Council open debate on children and armed conflict: "We agree that we cannot tolerate a world in which children are killed and maimed, ... and where schools and hospitals are attacked".

In this regard, we recall the findings of the Board of Inquiry, which were shared with the Security Council on 26 April, following an investigation into a number of incidents during the last Israeli war against the Gaza Strip, in which United Nations personnel, premises and operations and innocent civilians were affected. The Board found, inter alia, that 44 Palestinian civilians had been killed and 227 injured, among them many children, as a direct result of Israeli assaults on

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East schools in which Palestinian civilians had sought safety and shelter during the conflict. Here, we reiterate our call for accountability for these crimes committed against the Palestinian people, including our innocent children, who are being traumatized daily by the Israeli occupation and whose futures are in jeopardy of being completely lost if such Israeli impunity is not brought to a halt. We will spare no effort to hold the perpetrators accountable and ensure justice for the victims.

In this connection, we reiterate our call to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, and the Secretary-General, requesting the addition of the Israeli occupying forces in the list that is annexed to the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, owing to the grave and systematic violations that are perpetrated by the Israeli occupying forces against Palestinian children. We believe this to be an important and necessary step towards holding the perpetrators of crimes against children responsible for their actions, contributing to the efforts to end impunity and protecting children in all situations of armed conflict, without exception.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 541 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 17 April 2015 (A/ES-10/677-S/2015/260), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed against the Palestinian people. Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations